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## NKU students get help finishing degrees

NKU offers \$1,000 for near-graduates

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**HIGHLAND HEIGHTS** - When the Kentucky Post closed in December 2007, 39-year-old David Schumacher was without of a job and without a degree.

A program at Northern Kentucky University helped him change that.

"I was seven or eight classes shy of attaining my journalism degree in 1997 when I began working full-time for the Post shortly after getting married that year," Schumacher said. "I had always intended to return to NKU to finish work toward my degree and it seemed like the perfect time when the Post closed."

Schumacher returned to NKU under a program called Project Graduate. He finished his journalism degree in December.

Project Graduate is a statewide initiative targeting the more than 11,000 Kentucky adults who have 90 or more college credit hours from a Kentucky institution, but have not earned a bachelor's degree. Kentucky universities are contacting these former students and offering encouragement and assistance in finishing their degrees.

Since it was launched in November 2007, approximately 500 Kentuckians have earned their degrees through Project Graduate. According to a recent state survey, Project Graduate was a key motivator. The survey of 175 participants revealed that 59 percent would not be enrolled in college today if they hadn't heard about the program.

"At NKU we are offering a \$1,000 scholarship to those who qualify," said Vicki Culbreth, NKU's executive director of educational outreach. "This scholarship is awarded in \$250 increments each semester for four semesters. It is a small amount of money but does help pay for textbooks, etc. Most of the students I have spoken to have wanted to return - intended to return - and Project Graduate is a nudge to get them to do it now."

Culbreth said that NKU has 650 former students who qualify for the program.

The economic downturn may play a factor for some students to return to school, but it isn't the primary reason, Culbreth said.

"Honestly, the vast majority of students I work with tell me they are returning because they want the satisfaction of finishing their degrees," she said. "They regret that they were unable to do that years ago and want to close the circle."

Another benefit to returning students is the courses they'll have to complete.

"The part that appealed to me most was the fact that you could finish your degree under the same requirements that you entered NKU under, which in my case was the 1992 catalog," Schumacher said. "It also didn't hurt that the program provided you with a \$250 per semester grant."

For information, contact Vicki Culbreth at [projectgrad@nku.edu](mailto:projectgrad@nku.edu) or 859-392-2401.

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